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SAMUEL SIGILMAN









The Ingersoll Lecture, 1906

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# THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

OUR REASONS FOR IT

BY

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A GENTLEMAN," ETC.

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## THE INGERSOLL LECTURESHIP

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*Extract from the will of Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll,  
who died in Keene, County of Cheshire, New  
Hampshire, Jan. 26, 1893.*

*First.* In carrying out the wishes of my late beloved father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, as declared by him in his last will and testament, I give and bequeath to Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., where my late father was graduated, and which he always held in love and honor, the sum of Five thousand dollars (\$5000) as a fund for the establishment of a Lectureship on a plan somewhat similar to that of the Dudleyan lecture, that is — one lecture to be delivered each year, on any convenient day between the last day of May and the first day of December, on this subject, “the Immortality of Man,” said lecture not to form a part of the usual college course, nor to be delivered by any Professor or Tutor as part of his usual routine of instruction, though any such Professor or Tutor may be appointed to such service. The choice of said lecturer is not to be limited to any one religious denomination, nor to any one profession, but may be that of either clergyman or layman, the appointment to take place at least six months before the delivery of said lecture. The above sum to be safely invested and three-fourths of the annual interest thereof to be paid to the lecturer for his services and the remaining fourth to be expended in the publishment and gratuitous distribution of the lecture, a copy of which is always to be furnished by the lecturer for such purpose. The same lecture to be named and known as “the Ingersoll lecture on the Immortality of Man.”



## PREFACE

I HAVE undertaken in the following pages to state as simply as possible the reasons that urge me to a belief in the reality of the immortal life. It may be of interest to readers if I say a few words at the beginning about the "personal equation" in my own case. It has always been extremely easy for me to see the difficulties that arise in the way of a belief in immortality. I have taken pains never to escape the sight of these difficulties, but rather to seek them out and measure them at their full value. I am unhappy if I have an intimation that there lies somewhere any formidable consideration, with which I am not familiar, touching an important subject. I hold that no man knows one side or aspect of a question, unless he knows its other sides also.

Moreover, perhaps by some fault of temperament, I do not happen to have the intense yearning that many profess for an endless existence. I feel about a future life as one might feel in regard to setting forth upon an untried voyage; for example, to some distant star. So far as I have confidence that I am a citizen of a rational universe, I can conceive that the unknown voyage will be worth all the trouble it may cost. The venture stirs my interest. But otherwise, I have little sense of clinging to life, merely in order to live. Thus, though I heartily enjoy life, "taking it all in all," yet I have no eager desire to live however comfortably to great age, and I should distinctly deprecate for myself or for others the fulfilment of a certain noted Russian biologist's prophecy that mankind may learn to extend the average lifetime to a hundred and fifty years!

So far, then, as I feel desire for life, the desire is that my life may count for

something, and have use or value. Why should any one care to have existence at all, unless his life contributes in some way to the sum of the worth of the universe? Life, now and here, interests me, because it is social; that is, we are each able to serve, help, and enrich one another, and to increase the total wealth and welfare of humanity. It is only on some such terms as these that life seems worth living anywhere.

I have asked myself whether I would not be content if I might in some way pass over into that "immortality of influence" of which we sometimes hear. I think that I could be content, provided this were the best use to which I could be put, and provided this influence itself were more than a breath destined to pass away forever as soon as our tiny planet cools away. In other words, we can bear death, for ourselves, if we are not wanted anywhere. But we do wish to be able to respect the world we live in, and we could

hardly respect a universe that created a Socrates, a Michael Angelo, or an Epictetus only to destroy him, as the early gods are reputed to have devoured their own offspring.

This brings me frankly to confess to a certain bias. I own that the more I know about life, the more I desire to discover rationality in it. I had rather be a citizen for even a brief period in a significant and intelligent world than to live forever in a meaningless world. I had rather be able to look out for one day on the possibilities of an infinite universe than to possess millenniums circumscribed within bounds of time and place. I cannot help this kind of bias. It seems to be involved in the nature of mind. Other men gladly make the same confession. Here is one of the facts of human nature that thought has to reckon with.

It is as if there were something in us, like Prometheus in the ancient myth, that says in the face of all merely brute

powers: Break us down if you choose; annihilate us; yet we are more and greater than you; we defy you to hurt us. For we are the offspring of reason, and our supreme desire is toward the good and the beautiful. What a marvellous thing, on any ground, that such a conception has entered into Man's mind!

I have owned to a certain bias. Does the fact of such a bias constitute a disqualification against the student, the investigator, or the thinker who frankly acknowledges it and makes allowance accordingly? I think not. A man consults a physician upon the question of his health. He has a bias in favor of being found constitutionally sound. All the more careful is he to choose an expert physician, who will make no mistake even in favor of pronouncing him well. He will insist that his physician shall tell him the whole truth.

In fact, the very word "philosophy" implies a bias. One of its roots means

love. The true philosopher loves order, rationality, beauty, unity, goodness. He has a faith, that is, a bias toward belief that truth will be found one with the good. He is all the more bound, because of this bias, to insist on the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Like the man who ties his boat to its mooring, he is bound to test the holding power of his rope. If he can break it, he has no use for it. So the man who loves truth is never afraid to put it to rigorous tests. If he can break it down, he has no longer use for it.

I am aware that all this involves a majestic assumption. We suppose that there is such a reality as truth; we suppose that we live in a reasonable or logical world, and that our thinking follows certain intellectual laws. We suppose that our philosophical bias in favor of order and unity, like our instinct toward food, is a part of the reality of the world. We suppose that the sense of duty to follow truth, which honest men everywhere recognize,



is also real. If this is "reasoning in a circle," it is the only possible mode of reasoning.

We are able, however, to throw our minds "out of gear," and to suppose invalid our splendid assumption of a realm of order and reality. We can become thoroughgoing agnostics. What happens now? It follows that we have ceased for the time to be thinkers. We have got out of the world of logic into a dream world where no logic binds things together. Talk about "truth" as we may, we cease to feel any obligations to follow truth or speak truth. Terms and words that had meaning and value before, such as right and duty, now fade out of sight. All that remains to us is to be observers of sensations. To become thinkers again means to take up the old assumption, and to go on again as if we belonged to the ideal realm of logic, order, beauty, truth, duty, and unity.

Surely no one claims that the attitude of

intellectual agnosticism, except as a temporary experiment, is wholesome or fruitful. It is like holding one's breath, — a desirable power to use on occasion. But the moral and ideal life is always surging in us and compelling us to breathe. The more deeply we breathe, the more fully we live.

## THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY: OUR REASONS FOR IT

THERE are doubtless more people to-day than ever before in the history of the world who are in doubt whether they have any right to hope for immortality. Sometimes, they want so much to believe as to be reluctant to open the question at all or to face any facts which may seem to militate against their faith. Nevertheless, they are not comfortable in this irrational unwillingness to think about or discuss the greatest of subjects. Others have a vague idea that the hope of immortality is a matter of sentiment or blind faith, but not quite respectable in the realm of intelligence. Even high-minded men seem to feel that a duty to truth may compel them to smother a natural longing in their hearts to believe in immortality. They do not fairly credit

the possibility that reason, truth, and reality may lie on the side of this hope and not against it.

Still further, men are very shy of the supposed teachings of science. They are shocked to hear that certain scientific men doubt or disbelieve in immortality. Thus, it was remarked after a certain Ingersoll Lecture upon Immortality at Harvard University that the faces of the listeners, as they went out of the hall, bore a look of sadness, as if they had heard the death sentence pronounced. Did these people really expect that a man of science could bring chemical or physical facts to throw any light on the problem of immortality?

The fact is, that we are all on one level as regards the great questions that concern our common humanity. The study of ancient documents, acquaintance with Greek or Hebrew, familiarity with the terms of philosophy, expert knowledge of soils or material elements, no more than high office in church or state, gives a man special

standing above his fellows to tell them what they ought to do, or what they must believe, or what limit they must set to their ideals or their hopes. The ordinary observer thousands of years ago knew practically as much as the most learned physician knows to-day about the fact of death. To all visible appearances it ended life then as now. Nevertheless, in the face of all appearances to the contrary, hosts of people, both the unlettered and the thoughtful, have believed, and still believe, that death is not the end of man. It is possible to trace the development and the history of the phases of this extraordinary belief. But before the main question, whether or not this vast trend of belief points to a reality, the expert man of science only can say as he does say, that if his science gives him no reason to urge in the affirmative, it likewise gives him no knowledge more than the rest of us have to the contrary. The supreme condition for wise and sane thinking here — the

same as on every subject touching human welfare — is the fullest possible understanding of the facts that constitute and characterize human life, both as it commonly is and at its highest and best. We want also the largest intellectual hospitality and fearlessness.

There are certain concessions which must occur to every one who begins to think about immortality. Let us range them up in clear sight and discover frankly how weighty they are. Doubtless if we knew nothing else but these things, we should not dream of immortality.

In the first place, modern science has in no respect changed, for better or worse, the ordinary doctrine of plain common sense touching the fact of physical death. To the unaided senses death is death, the cessation of all consciousness. No one certainly is able to see how life can continue.

Moreover, so far as any apparent evidence goes for the continued existence of myriads of "souls" or "spirits," who have

passed through the gate of death, this evidence is of the most meagre character. No one can show that such a mode of continued life is impossible. But most of us, not being trained as detectives, are obliged to wait for the discovery of modes of communication that will bridge the gulf that now surely seems to divide "the quick" from "the dead." Meanwhile the general style of the alleged messages from the spirit-world is not such as to make continued existence there seem precious or desirable by comparison with the best actual values of life in this world. It is pathetic to suppose the wisest and best among "the mighty dead" are so helplessly balked in their desires to reach their earthly friends as at the most only to convey to them dreary platitudes and trivialities,—the mere echoes of what we have already heard.

It might be said that one tremendous event in human history — the resurrection of Jesus — ought to set aside all question.

It is a striking fact that during the ages when few perhaps doubted the story of the resurrection, the fear of death weighed on men's minds as at no other period. Few out of millions seem really to have taken pleasure in the hope of immortality. The time has now come when a man, even though he be a member of a Christian church, wants more than the tradition of an event far away in time and space, which itself needs to be demonstrated. Men feel as an old minister in Boston once remarked to a friend, "I wish as long as I live to cling to the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, but I do not see how the next generation can do this." And they probably add, as this minister did, "I am very thankful that my hope in immortality does not depend upon the resurrection." It is at least highly significant that when a notable leader in a great evangelical church, Dr. George A. Gordon, presents his best thought in his book, "The Witness to Immortality," he takes pains to



establish the theistic faith by philosophy, before he adduces his reasons for believing in the resurrection of Jesus. Neither is it common for the professors in theological schools to make immortality stand or fall upon the testimony of the men and women who are reputed in the Gospels to have seen Jesus after his death. For throughout history too many marvelous stories of like events have been told to permit us to rest any precious conviction upon such testimony. At any rate, whether we like it or not, we must concede that this is the habitual attitude of the modern mind. To state it in positive terms, we are convinced that the only sure ground for the hope of immortality must be in the fact that we are in some true sense immortal by nature. For unless we thus possess immortality, no miracle could demonstrate this fact.

Again, we admit that no one can see how the transition can be made into any other life than this which we here know—

a life involved at every breath and thought with the senses and physical conditions. This element of utter mystery is already contained in the present life. Who knows at all how it is enabled to proceed? Who knows even what the senses are of which we lightly speak? Who in this era of astounding transition regarding all physical theory can draw a line between matter and mind, or even say that the most solid material is not in reality as subtle, elusive, and invisible as thought is, or will, or spirit? Who shall say that spirit is not the more comprehensive word, rather than matter or physics? Everything goes to show this as likely. The question of the "how," pushed far enough, would seem no more to threaten the splendid possibilities of an immortal life than it threatens to destroy the actuality of our present existence.

We must add that we frankly call immortality a hope. This is what it has usually been, and what it is quite possible

that it always must remain. From its nature it must be a hope. So far as it lies in the future it is beyond our sight. If it means little, — the playing of harps and pianos and endless gossip, — we might be told by one of its messengers what it is like. But the more it means, the less could any one — even God himself — tell us in advance what or how it may be. In this respect it would only follow the analogy of the profoundest experiences of the present life. Who could have made known to us beforehand the mysteries, and yet the indisputable facts, of friendship, of fatherhood or motherhood, of the high joys of art and poetry?

It follows, doubtless, that our minds may sway on this subject, as on other subjects of human interest, all the way from more or less wonder and uncertainty to various degrees of conviction and confidence. Some may even sway back and forth from a positive to a negative attitude. Few minds, perhaps, rest solidly

either on the side of the denial of immortality, or again on the side of such absolute belief, as, for example, Theodore Parker and Tennyson were wont to express. Even Whittier seems to have wavered in his belief. The fact of such wavering on the part of many minds may as well be frankly admitted. It seems to be a law governing our changing moods, that when we suffer depression, our concern, whether with or without adequate ground, touches the subject that we care most for. Even the millionaire may thus apprehend that he is coming to want.

Once more, it must be confessed to be a burden upon our thought of immortality that there are so many of us. No one now knows how long the world has been the habitation of man, but the increasing succession of the generations of human beings of all ages and degrees of intelligence, from the level of animals upward, quite baffles our imagination. And yet tremendous as is the burden of our thought,

the fundamental weight of the mystery consists in the fact which we all admit; namely, this vast procession of toiling, suffering, aspiring human lives. We have not only the question, What will become of them? but the question, Why are they here on this vast march of life at all?

Let me pass on to present as rapidly as possible the great sweep of the reasons that forever, and always more and more powerfully, impel the mind to the hope of immortality.

First, I am impressed with the fact that man's life not only belongs to the realm of the senses and what we call material things, but it belongs essentially, in respect to all that most concerns us as human, to the invisible realm of thought or spirit. Whatever we name this realm of being, even if we shy at such a makeshift word as "spirit" to describe it, the fact faces us that we are men, not merely by virtue of the circulation of blood in our veins, but

by virtue of feelings, ideas, aspirations, convictions, states of consciousness, which cannot be weighed or measured, but which are at least as real as anything that we can see or touch. We play with numbers, we poetize, we behold visions of beauty, we love and we forgive, we dream of human welfare to be worked out centuries beyond our time; we philosophize over vast schemes of optimism or pessimism. This is simply to say that we inhabit an ideal or spiritual realm.

We need not now enter into the question of what this realm of spirit is. We need not insist that there is any division between it and the realm where visible "things" appear and animals breathe and move. Grant, if you choose, that some profound underlying substance makes the realm of spirit one with the realm of matter. We only say that the realm of thought and spirit exists. You cannot live a human life and ignore it. Its facts are at least as real as any facts

are. That they cannot be measured by the instruments of the laboratory does not touch their validity. We know that we love our children, when we cannot even see their faces, much less see the motion of our love. The idea or hope of immortality obviously belongs in this realm of man's life. Whatever you think of it, it is on this range and not on the range of food values that we have to discuss it.

Next, it occurs to us that the presence and prevalence of the idea of immortality in such a world as this is a wonderful thing. It is wonderful if the spiritual interpretation of the universe is true. But it is also wonderful, if this is only a material world and the idea of immortality has not a shred of reality behind it. I am aware of the nature of the hints and suggestions through which students of the childhood of the race tell us that this idea may have grown up. Grant all that they say. The idea in itself is none the less magnifi-

cent and wonderful. Suppose it to have been born on the side of man's senses and out of material environment. The wonder is that it found a sort of soil in man's mind to grow in and to become what it is now at its highest, — a majestic and daring hope, free of selfishness, noble and ennobling, setting aside all bounds of space and time. This is a most extraordinary product to come out of the mere play of animal tissue! You can no more explain it in this blundering way than you can explain your conviction of a proposition in geometry or any other profound fact of consciousness by the motion of particles in your brain. The movement of the particles, whatever it may be, is subordinate to the spiritual reality which they only serve to image or register. Why do atoms of matter so move together as to register and impress thoughts and ideas?

Again, it is worth while to pass over on occasion to the side of absolute scepticism,



and to look over the precipice which, in the denial of the hope of immortality, now awaits the mind. The mind is not between a difficult belief and an easy doubt. The doubt is itself gigantic. Can we believe that the march of all the generations of mankind has been the way of death only? Can we believe that the noblest and holiest, the grand men of genius, the leaders and helpers of mankind, have perished like so many cattle? Then we must translate all life into the terms of final death. "The Choir Invisible," and everything else, disappears and "leaves not a wrack behind." The more we contemplate this negative interpretation of the universe, the more tremendous is the strain on our intelligence. Scepticism becomes at least as difficult as faith seemed to be.

The fact is, this is a world of values with all sorts of gradations upward. The more we investigate and ponder, the more clearly these values emerge and

indeed become necessary to thought. It is a workable theory of the world that its chief use, and happiness, and aim, so far as man is concerned, consists in learning values and knowing how to direct them. The child or the savage plays with counters and beads. Presently he learns the uses of all sorts of tools and building materials. Why does he build and learn to toil? His eyes are now toward the meaning of home and citizenship, of friendship and love, of justice, mercy, and humanity. The happiness of a Franklin, for instance, rises from indulgence in sensual things to a quite new value of happiness; namely, the desire to do good, that sets all sensual things under his feet. There is a limit to the lower kind of values. You can buy them off with other values of their own kind, or you can exhaust them. There is really no limit to the values that appear in the realm of the spirit. You cannot buy a mother's love or a patriot's devotion. You cannot exhaust the justice in a com-

munity by overdrafts. There is doubtless what must be called, for want of any better term, an "infinite" element in the higher ranges of values, as if gold and jewels were but figures and images to set these nobler values forth. It is the mark of manhood or intelligence, not to doubt this, but rather to recognize it.

The idea of immortality is an assertion of the indestructible worth of the values that characterize humanity at its best. The lower values, even force and motion and the atoms of matter, appear to persist, even while they change their forms. At any rate, they effect something in exact proportion to their bigness. They all make the way and lead up to the fruitage of the universe in its high values of truth, wisdom, justice, and good will. To affirm "immortality" is simply to say that in a world where other and lower values all accomplish something, and pass on and up in the trend of their action, where even a grain of sand on the seashore has its place and

does not exist for naught, where the spring flower has its chance to die in order to live again in the form of fruit at the harvest, the greatest of all values, to which the others are mere counters, must likewise go on in their proper sphere and not come to naught. My mind, as it takes the path of least resistance, is forced to take this track in its thought. What hopeless confusion of all that we know about values it would be, if we had to think that after a few æons, while the frozen earth still kept every atom intact and registered in its material every impact of force, all the high values that had made it once worth while to study its elements and its forces — the humane and spiritual values that men had been working out with their toil, their tears, their blood, had utterly vanished ! This is to say that all virtue and goodness have the worth of the pigment of a rose leaf, or the tint of a summer cloud. Our intelligence reacts from such a doctrine. Our intelligence then reacts toward the idea of immortality.

There is no such thing as justice, or truth, or love, in the abstract. All these are the terms by which we describe persons. Where no persons are, there is no conceivable thought, or righteousness, or will, either good or bad. Expel if you can the idea of personality from the universe, and it is doubtful whether anything would be left, for everything appears to exist in some relation or other to conscious and intelligent, that is personal, life. What is force that represents no directing will? What is matter, except the crude stuff with which intelligence shapes thought and expresses itself? There is no intelligible attribute or quality in things, in weight or color or taste, except as some person either uses or perceives the attribute. Its existence has no significance without an intelligence; that is, a person into whose consciousness it can enter. This is to say, that the visible world somehow fits into the spiritual fact of personality, and the universe breaks up with personality taken out of it.

Be this as it may, it is evident that immortality is and must be personal immortality. There is often haziness of thought on this point, as if personal qualities might be immortal and persons cease to be. What, for example, would become of "immortal" righteousness in a world where no persons existed? How does any one suppose an abstract immortal "influence" would leap out of a dead planet to effect action in some star in the system of Sirius?

When we speak of personality, however, we tread in the realm of mystery. There is nothing so real and precious. We are as sure of our personality as we are of any fact, but it cannot be weighed or measured, and it can hardly be described. It is as mysterious in man as it is in the thought of God, no more and no less. It does not consist in bodily form, but it shines through the form and uses it, as God may be conceived to shine through and to use the structure of the universe. The most that we know about it in man is that it is not

complete, but is something in the process of making. It is hardly observable at birth; it is normally most evident at the end of man's career. It distinguishes man from all other animals; for while they and he begin alike and have much in common, and while no one can dogmatize as to the limits of their possibilities, man alone rises to the possession of actual, though still imperfect, personality. Every little child and the lowest savage possess at least potentialities in this direction.

We know true personality best in the well-developed and highest types of men, as we know fruit best when it is really ripe. There have been men and women throughout human history who have been true, generous, faithful unto death, fearless, and kind. These qualities alone would not perhaps have constituted them persons. What makes their personality is a certain unity in their lives, whereby all their experiences and their acts tend to become harmonized, as it were, and to

move in one direction. If the atom may be considered as a tiny centre or vortex of force, we can by a parable say that the life of a person is some such centre of spiritual force. Let us call this spiritual force love or good will. The noblest life is doubtless that in which all its powers and gifts — the more of them, the better — move in unison with the ruling good will. Here is a kind of life on which you can depend; it will not disappoint you; it will grow more noble and consistent; it will increase in its momentum; it is a thing of beauty; all men love and admire it.

Grant for a moment that there had been only one such life of a refined and all-round person; it would be the most wonderful and significant human fact that men could study. No investigation of physical things could begin to be so interesting and important as the evolution of a single complete, normal, and ripened life. Here is one who has the secret of happiness; here is promise of finding out to what



man may attain. Is it possible to develop other mature and normal lives, such as this was? The fact is, that we have not only a single life worthy to be called a true person; we have an increasing number of such lives. We are accumulating the biographies of a legion of noble personalities. There were never so many produced as in the past century. We begin to see the human conditions upon which their development depends. They are largely spiritual conditions. No man can be accounted a student of science who would neglect the consideration of these facts of personality. Do we not believe in personality? If not, what do we believe in, or what value is there in studying the processes of life and not coming to the secret of life itself?

Let us consider a moment the extraordinary impression that the righteous or noble personality always makes on our minds, and this in its fulness, the more mature we are ourselves. Take the

instance of Jesus. It is not necessary to believe that his risen body passed through closed doors and appeared to his disciples. The deeper fact is that his person seemed to those who knew him to be above the range of death. That which constituted him a person was not that which died. We are not speaking in this instance of some evanescent quality, like the perfume of a flower, but of that which was the heart and essence of the man's being, his very self. Such is the nature of the person at its best. There is no word to call it by that seems more accurately to describe it than the term "immortal." This word alone carries the impression which such a life makes on beholders. We are not saying that this impression must therefore be true, but we are inclined to think that, if all lives were so complete as some whom we have heard of and known, no one would doubt that man is "immortal."

We tend to believe that this is a world of purpose. This is only to think that the universe must have significance. A purposeless universe seems to us contemptible. It may be said that our own minds impress this idea upon us, and the desire to find purpose creates our belief. But our minds are themselves the outgrowth or the children of the universe. The nature of intelligence is to seek order, significance, purpose. It cannot be irrational to trust this character of our minds. It would look as if the highest faculty in us answered to the highest fact of the universe. The contrary supposition certainly reduces all thought to mockery.

Now, the idea of immortality is almost the only means of expressing our thought of a purposeful universe. To say that the highest values do not die, to say that noble persons go on in their personality, to think that the universe exists to manifest and to develop this order of life, is to affirm a purpose worthy of the universe. Is there

any other conceivable purpose? If so, what is it? For a universe of mere everlasting succession of shifting phenomena is not a rational universe.

To believe in a purposeful universe is to believe in the integrity of the universe; namely, that it is one, that it is orderly, and that it can be depended upon. All science really proceeds upon this faith. It is "faith," for though it grows out of our own experience and observation, we cannot absolutely demonstrate it. All philosophy is the attempt to think the facts of the world and of life into some harmony and unity. The very word "universe," that we use so glibly, is the expression of a conviction or faith in the integrity of the world. It would be strange and unreasonable to use this word to sum up the result of our impressions of visible or material things, and then, just where the interpretations of visible things touch the life of man, to stop saying "the universe," and to reduce the realm of human or spiritual

facts to chaos. We are possessed by the intellectual necessity, if we think of a universe at all, to think of it so throughout. The profound facts of human personality must belong to the integrity of the universe and must be safeguarded and not brought to confusion by its laws. This is just what we mean when we utter our hope of immortality. There is that in the universe which does not merely play with man's life, which does not create its offspring, — Isaiah, Jesus, Dante, Lincoln, — and then blindly dash them to pieces, like foam on the beach. Such is our instinctive idea of the integrity of the world, without the faith in which both science and philosophy lose their way.

To affirm our belief in the integrity of the world is also to conceive that we are ourselves a part of that integrity and that we partake of its nature; I mean, of course, at our best, and as we become more completely persons. We differ herein

by a great height from the merely animal life. We share with the animals in the elements which compose our bodies, but we are lifted above the animal world in the sense of the order, the beauty, the intelligence, the movement and evolution of life, the conception of purpose—all that constitutes ideal, intellectual, or spiritual integrity. We are as much children of the universe on this most rational side of it, as we are its children on the side of our physical environment.

Men sometimes ask whether, if man is immortal, he must not always have existed? We may well afford to let this mystery pass. The main fact is, that in all that makes man most human he seems to partake, now and here, of that spiritual substance which conceives, ordains, and creates the world. He enters into the vastness, the complexity, and the unity of its scheme as if it were a drama unrolled for his understanding and his delight. He and the great Dramatist must be akin. For it is

not credible that man made the drama out of his dreams. Whence then the dreams?

It is a world of startling possibilities. The last hundred years have witnessed an astonishing series of developments on the physical side. The most extraordinary predictions have come true. The most unexpected powers have been developed, as if men had only to turn them on and use them. The most hidden secrets have opened up to light. The range of mystery surrounding man's sight has been transfigured from a realm of darkness into blue sky, full of stars and light. The wonder is not that man is so little, but that he is so mighty. He inhabits a world of infinite possibility. There appears a profound law of prayer underlying all things. In less mystical terms, there tends to be some provision to meet every genuine need or desire. It is as if it were written: "Whatever is best, that shall come to pass. Ask and ye shall receive."

Shall we trust this law of our nature in all outward things and stop trusting it in the one sphere where life becomes significant and most human? The possibilities stretch in every direction. The unexpected happens. Geniuses, intellectual and spiritual, come to birth. New ranges of character and happiness disclose themselves. New necessities are laid upon us.

It is here that the old parable of the chrysalis and the butterfly has its significance. It is only a parable, but it happens beautifully to illustrate the marvellous law of surprises with which nature forever meets us. It is no objection to the action of nature to urge that we cannot see how a thing can be done. Again and again the thing is done that we would not have dared to believe possible. It is as if we were traversing a winding road among forests and hills and streams. We come to places where the way seems blocked by towering cliffs, and we march to what



seems the edge of a chasm. As we go, the way turns and opens and shows great stretches of view that we never had imagined. This is the nature of the world we live in. It is no monotonous or machine-made universe. Its waters break out of solid ice; at a little change of their particles they leap out of our sight and become invisible and expanding power. "We know not what we shall be."

There is no article of more common faith than that this is somehow a moral world. This is the faith of the best thinkers. It shows no sign of abatement because men study science. On the contrary, Franklin and Darwin and Huxley and Haeckel are always teaching us to tell the truth and be honest. Why? Because the world of facts and the world of men and the history of mankind urge tremendous lessons upon us, and all in one direction. "Be righteous," they say. "Be modest, be truthful, be humane; show your

good will; do good and not evil." Here is the way of life. These are the very values which we saw enter into the constitution of personality, as the iron and lime enter into our bones. They are in us because they are in the structure of the universe. How else? We made them ourselves no more than we made the iron, or created electricity, or invented gravitation. We are what we are because we participate in the moral structure which belongs to the universe and which therefore impresses itself upon us.

An appeal to justice is often made in favor of immortality. Men have suffered innocently here, and they ought, it is said, to have compensating satisfaction somewhere else. But this appeal to justice is in itself an expression of a faith in an ideal or just universe. It implies a standard of right. So far, then, this expectation of justice, sure sometime to be made manifest, is an instinctive tribute of human nature to

the conception of an ideal universe. The hope of immortality is wrapped up in the thought of a just world.

We have referred to the idea of an "immortality of influence," which many good agnostics and high-minded men of science are pleased to recommend for the substance of hope. Of course this is not immortality at all. But the fine thought behind it is another tribute to a fundamental idealism that characterizes noble natures. Where is this mystery of influence that we all acknowledge and believe in? It is not in physics or chemistry or climatic conditions. It is in the invisible realm of thought and emotion. It makes men humane and sets up new currents of action and will in them. Whoever talks of influence expresses his faith in a spiritual universe. Immortality is only another of the terms used by the citizens of that universe.

I have said hardly a word about God. We care for facts and not for names. But

the play of a blind power, the motion of atoms, or even of an infinite multitude of mystic centres of life, would not constitute a universe. Unity itself is essentially an intellectual or spiritual conception. Even to talk of force comes near to saying will. What we discover in the universe and in ourselves as a part of the universe, — power, intelligence, order, purpose, integrity, unity, and especially that which we find in the most mature and perfect men, namely, righteousness and good will, — all this goes to describe a person. We mean a person in no narrow and material sense, but in the only sense in which personality can exist, that is, in the realm of thought and spirit. We have facts or qualities which cannot possibly be detached from one another, or supposed to exist each by itself. They are facts which cohere and tend to make a harmony. They imply a kernel of reality. They are facts which man only discovers, but does not create. It is under the impress of these facts,

peculiar to personality, that in all times men have tended to some thought of God. They cannot lightly shake off this thought. It stands for the only rational answer to what would otherwise be the blind enigma of existence. It is mysterious enough, but so also is our own existence as persons. It is no harder to demonstrate than is the fact of the personality or selfhood of our friends. All incongruous appearances to the contrary, the men around us on the whole impress us as persons and not as bodies only. Their faces, often impassive or expressionless or even forbidding to us, at times flash out messages, thoughts, and the conviction of a guiding purpose, and we believe in them, and love them accordingly in a manner that transcends the physical senses. So we seem to receive flashes of intelligence, purpose, good will, out of the heart of the universe, and we believe in it as the seat of an infinite personal life. The mind rests in this thought, as it rests in no other thought. The

phenomena of the world fall into order under this thought as they will not otherwise. Especially as we live in fidelity to this thought, and try the experiments which it requires of us, we find life at its fullest degree of satisfaction. This thought of God seems to match with other things and to bind them together and to complete the integrity. Out of this thought of God grows all religion. And man seems to be constituted to need some kind of religion.

It is interesting to observe that in all ancient pantheons, there were plenty of gods, but no real persons. The gods were like so many quarrelling and arrogant men—only persons in the making. The modern idea of the immanent God at last brings us the conception of full personality. Here is the unity of power, thought, beauty, and goodness. Here is perfect good will, manifesting itself in a divine purpose of bringing its creation, its children, to the fulfilment of personality like its own. Take this at first as a work-

ing theory, as one takes the idea of gravitation in the physical realm, and see how all problems, intellectual and practical, fall into lines of order.

Pause here a moment and see what it means that man should ever have dared to dream of such a thought of God. Confuse all his thinking, shatter his faith, smother his aspirations, reduce him to the ashes of the barest and most narrow form of materialism, yet you can never again think meanly of the creature, risen out of the dust, in whose thought has been created the beautiful temple of such a faith. If he is not a child of God, then, as has been wittily remarked, a God ought to be created to account for the glorious audacity of this mere creature of a day. Again, as ever before, we find ourselves not between a difficult belief and an easy denial, but face to face with an incredible kind of denial, which baffles thought and makes science and philosophy alike barren.

The hope of immortality is no doubt an outgrowth or consequence of the thought of God. Men can never prove it by itself as an isolated dogma. It is a part of the integrity of religion itself. It is here that we distrust any alleged material proof of immortality. If our existence is not involved in the warp and woof of the spiritual structure of the world, if our nature is not of the immortal order, then while you might prove that the spirits of the dead continue to exist in some strange whispering gallery beyond our usual reach, this would not be immortal life.

See now what it means when we venture in any real sense to say that "we believe in God," in other words, that purposive goodness is in the heart and essence of the universe. We are bound to believe at a leap that the best possible will come to pass. The intelligence and the power of the universe are pledged to work out a destiny worthy of the scale of the infinite thought. This is involved in the integrity



of the universe, and in its rationality. The preposterous will not be suffered to happen. We could not respect a God, much less worship or love any being, who brought ranks of creatures into existence, shared the mightiest thoughts with them, inspired infinite hopes in them, lifted the noblest of them into rapturous communion with Himself, continually unfolded their minds and hearts and disclosed the unexhausted capacities of their being, only to drop them into nothingness, as children blow their soap-bubbles and drop them out of the window to burst and vanish. Is this all that God can do? We do not find this credible. The fact is, the thought of immortality grows right out of the heart of our faith in theism. You cannot separate them from each other.

A word may naturally be expected here touching the common expectation of the world about future rewards and punishments. Justice demands, it is thought,

that the unequal conditions of human life shall sometime be equalized. Without venturing to claim so much as this, without daring to assail the moral order as unjust even in this life, insisting that except in a moral world it is meaningless to talk of justice or injustice, we are bound to say that human existence at least points toward and seems to call for some adequate fulfilment. We see in each life the beginnings of the making of a person; we interpret even failures and crimes into the terms of moral discipline; we look for an outcome worthy of the cost and pain. No outcome except the final winning of personality satisfies our minds. We ask for no childish system of rewards; we do want, by a deep law of our being, to be of some use in the universe. The only way to be of use is through the growth of our personality. But the life of this world is not enough to fulfil our personality — a name to describe a sort of infinite growth.

The hope of immortality is not a mere subject of thought; it has to do with a man's power and essential well-being. We ask what the factors are that constitute a normal or healthy life, or, in other words, what makes a life most efficient and happy? One of these factors clearly is a righteous purpose; another is good will; the element of hope is another. A man may live without hope, but he can never be at his best so. Take away all hope and you have diminished his life power.

May not the man, however, have hope in his heart and yet not in any sense think of immortality? Doubtless, indeed, many persons find hope in the notion of a posthumous influence, or in a dream of coming fame, as children in a beleaguered and doomed city might think of to-morrow's play. My point is that hope, while it may live in a vague way without any definite object, tends to die at the roots with the denial of immortality. This kind

of denial, if outright, becomes, the more one considers it, a fatal limitation. The larger a man's nature, the more you have hurt him the moment you have cut off all sky view, as it were, from his sight and shut his soul within finite walls. Suffer him a bare window-pane through which a star may shine, and his soul will live. Deny him all rays of the infinite possibilities, and the man will never be the same in moral or spiritual health. We know this by experience, having made experiments with ourselves and having swayed at times from the mood of hope to the mood of utter doubt. It was as if the spiritual temperature had gone down toward the line of death.

The fact that the hope of immortality quickens the flow of all our interests and makes life seem worth while, the fact that the man with this hope in his heart is more alive and effective, and that the denial of the great hope lowers the moral temper-

ature, does not demonstrate immortality. But the fact is very significant. So far as we believe in a universe, here is one of the harmonies that go to constitute it. So far as we believe in the intellectual integrity of the world, here is another point out of many, where it is really easier to believe that nature is true in stirring hopes in us and making them essential to our best life, than that she is playing false with us. Do not the biologists tell us to trust in whatever makes life richer or more effective?

This factor of hope is specially bound up with our social and moral activity. Granted the hope of immortality, we have a different kind of world from that world from which hope is closed. It is as different as a voyage to a port on a splendid ship is different from floating on a loose raft in mid ocean. This is not to deny that heroism might be shown on the raft, for example, by dropping off the raft to give

more room and food for the survivors. But no one would exert himself very much to propel the hopeless raft, unless a ship appeared on the horizon. So while we might and would maintain the kind of negative morality which consists in doing no injury to our neighbors, unless in an atmosphere of hope we should lack the virile and positive moral earnestness which urges men to arduous and costly efforts for liberty, for democracy, for new standards of humanity. We do not need to say "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." If we are noble, we can never say this. But the very word "noble" appeals to the thought of the sacredness and significance of human life, to the idea of spiritual values, to the hope of human progress. To deny immortality is to deny the very values to the sense of which all heroism appeals. Who could feel the slightest enthusiasm in efforts to crowd the land with millions of people, all furnished with model houses and a living

wage, but believing nothing and hoping nothing beyond their brief span of years, more than the comfortable cattle on which they fed? Better, we say, to have been thrown to the lions in the Coliseum, better to have marched to death with Joan of Arc, better to have been mobbed with Garrison or Lovejoy, than to live in a world where the eternal visions had perished. But when we say this, we go over to that side where hope springs immortal again and will not die.

This is to say that all the magnificent words which make literature, and ring through literature and poetry like battle-cries to rally men to their highest modes of action, — *justice, truth, virtue, heroism, the good, the best*, — such words, bespeaking man's spiritual nature, group themselves with the words "hope" and "immortality." They stand or fall together. Raise your estimate of one of these words, and you unconsciously raise

your estimate of all. Depreciate any one of them, and you depreciate all alike. Set a price or a limit upon the worth of virtue and you have limited your vision of all things hoped for. Set a finite limit upon hope, and you have set the same finite limit upon virtue or truth. You have even depreciated also the value of logic and reason.

We may think of three departments that make the unity of life,—thought, feeling, and conduct or practice. There is no subject which does not fall under these three dimensions. There is no subject which we really understand unless we know it in each of these three aspects. Even with the study of mathematics, goes the natural sense of admiration at its beautiful exactness and its infinite ranges, as well as an impulse to experiment in the handling of concrete numbers and forms. The hope of immortality, likewise, is not a mere mode of



feeling any more than it is a startling subject of intellectual curiosity; it also touches the practical life. Each man has his choice, either to live as if the hope of immortality were a delusion, or as if it were valid. Here are two different modes of conduct. The same man with this hope veritably added to his possessions is a different man in temper and behavior from the man he would be with this hope subtracted from his being. See how much this means. Let us state our argument in the following form:—

It is generally agreed that no physicist has demonstrated or can possibly demonstrate the denial of immortality. He can no more deny than he can demonstrate. On the other hand, every one must admit that on the side of man's essential humanity, there are a whole series of striking considerations which have always suggested some profound fact underlying the thought of immortality. There is therefore plenty of room

to hope. To say the least, it is as intelligent to hope as to deny. We may then legitimately make experiments with ourselves and watch their outcome. We can take the idea of immortality as a working theory, as we may and often do take theism. We may live a day, or a month, or a year, on the basis of this theory, and act accordingly. We act thus as the children of eternity. We treat and respect ourselves, we treat and respect other men as beings of an immortal nature. All meanness, injustice, selfishness, is straightway ruled out of our lives. Anxieties and fears cease for the man who conceives of himself as upon an immortal course. We have immediately lighted upon a great secret of the happy life. No man ever truly made the sort of practical experiment in conduct that befits the hope of immortality without a distinct lift in the range of his being. Neither does he in this kind of experiment shut his eyes to, much less deny, a single

known fact. He simply puts his emphasis upon the facts that make him a man, rather than upon the facts that constitute his body.

We are here probably using the same kind of reasoning which Professor William James applies under the somewhat obscure name of "pragmatism." Dr. Washington Gladden calls it "The Practice of Immortality." We discover that a man cannot possibly behave too nobly. The nearer his conduct becomes to that of an immortal being, the better it is for him in heart, mind, body, and all. He is thus most closely a complete man and at the height of his personality.

Now, we have no other test of truth than that it is whatever fits or makes harmony, or, more plainly, works well. We tend to believe in a thing if, without fatal drawbacks, it is good for use. We believe in most human propositions on this basis. We believe, for example, in the monogamous family, in popular education,

or in the democratic theory of government. We follow a good clew as far as it will carry us. So in practical conduct, we follow the hope of immortality. It not only makes the harmony or unity which we need in our thinking, but, better yet, it fits into practice at once and goes to make life effective and whole.

Professor James has written on "The Will to Believe." We suspect that these words and the form of his argument must carry a prejudice to many minds. We scorn to believe merely by force of will. We will not consent to believe or to hope, unless for good reason. We will not believe a thing merely because it is pleasant. But we purpose none the less to be good investigators. We are quite willing therefore to take the attitude of hope — as legitimate an attitude as that of doubt; we take it, not by sheer force of will, but so far as grand spiritual considerations and humane sympathies naturally urge us toward it. We will watch what happens

to us; we will be on our guard against false conclusions. We will not shut ourselves away from the climate of hope on the ground that it is a healthy climate to live in. Other things being equal, this is precisely the reason why we should live in it.

What if it should prove that the hope of immortality grows naturally out of the practice of a certain worthy kind of life, and cannot be easily had except upon the terms of such a life? This is to say that immortality belongs to persons. This is to say that its quality begins here and now in so far as men become persons. The lower and the less unified the personality, the less reason has any one to be persuaded of immortality. The more we care for personality, the higher we conceive it, the more we grow toward it, the more instinctively we are possessed with the thought that it cannot die.

This accounts for our swaying moods from hope to doubt and back again. This

accounts for the differences of attitude between various men. Do we drop to a vulgar mood and think in terms of bricks or money? In our lowest moods no argument for immortality avails much with us. Do we catch sight of some great personality, — an Emerson, a Channing, Marcus Aurelius? Do we see for the moment what such a personality is worth beyond all visible treasures? Then in this our highest mood whole ranges of vision move us to hope. Show us persons enough, stir us often enough to aspire to be persons, and we should habitually expect immortality. In other words, the hope of immortality tends to be a sort of measure of our spiritual health and growth.

Is not this, again, what we should expect in a moral universe? The hope of immortality is not a cheap thing; it is costly. It is not an idea that can be had merely for the reading of books; it cannot be demonstrated in an evening at a lecture hall by “materializations”; it cannot even

be had on the strength of the bodily re-appearance of the best man who ever lived. It depends upon character and grows out of character. It goes with the daily practice of immortality. Otherwise, it is only at best a matter of temperament, tradition, and hearsay.

A very important consideration follows. All that the reason can do with any problem touching conduct is to give advice. The reason can pronounce that a certain course seems on the whole worth while to entertain and pursue. Its advice is like a permissive bill enacted by a legislature. Whether one takes such advice or not, depends upon a distinct motion of the will. So now with the thought of immortality, the reason gives its permission to move in the direction of a magnificent hope. "Go over, if you will," says the reason, "to the side of the hope, and let the hope sway you. Do not fear any longer to let yourselves go." Many persons need to take

this counsel to heart. The reason has done all that it can. It unties their chains and sets them free. The way of the open sky lies before them. Let them set forth, and take the good of their hope, and see what comes of it. Hope, like every other normal function, grows by exercise. Right as we were to pause and refuse to move, while the directing mind asked time to consider, as soon as the mind gives us even as much as the freedom of a mighty "Perhaps" or "Suppose," we now become wise in taking all the freedom that belongs to us. For we are not creatures of reason alone, but of heart and will and life also.

We may now fairly ask whether there is not a certain reality in the old-fashioned idea of authority, namely, that certain persons have been endowed with the right to teach their fellows the doctrine of immortality? We answer, Yes, there are authorities, albeit not infallible, touching every



subject of human interest. Thus we listen to the testimony of every good man who speaks out of his experience of the facts of the good life. We pass judgment on the comparative sanity and soundness of men who speak on this subject, as on every other subject. On certain points we find a growing tendency to a consensus of experience and opinion. Such a consensus of the noble and high-minded does rightly move our minds, not to follow in blindness, but to listen with respect.

Here is the authority of such a Master in the good life as Jesus was. Did he feel within himself the stirrings of an immortal nature? Did he have visions of personality for which this earthly life seemed a mere beginning? We are impressed that he was a real man and spoke out of genuine experience. What if he and others saw more than the average man has yet seen? At our best, we tend to see and to say very similar things. Whatever any human being has tried and discovered for himself to

be real, becomes authoritative to persuade us to make trial of the same. In this sense there was never so much authority for the idea of immortality as there is to-day. The world never had access to so many of the lives of the wise, the noble, and the true-hearted, the men of veritable religion, as it has to-day. With all degrees of caution and assurance the cheering voices come to us of those who sing as they go with their faces to the light. Those who give this testimony are not the selfish, they are not the light-minded, they wish no mere gift of years; they desire no idle heaven; they pray rather to be useful; they have lived the life of good will, and they trust that good will is the most enduring force in the universe. They go out into the mystery as those ready to do the deeds of good will forever. They approve themselves to us as worthy to be called citizens of the universe, for there is no conceivable place where they would not be at home. They seem to us of the nature of the infinite life

at the heart of the world. We do not think that we shall be misled in following their lead.

I have no idea of making a chain of so many links to compel assent. On the contrary, I have simply tried to set forth the mass of considerations that always and increasingly urge my own mind, even in its most sceptical moods, to face toward the way of hope. I have dealt with facts at every step, not indeed facts that can be studied with the help of the microscope, but nevertheless the solid facts in which human life consists. What impresses me in that these facts all go together and point one way. They are cumulative. They belong to a certain unity which you cannot break without doing violence to every essential part of the whole. The hope of immortality arises out of this unity of thought, feeling, and conduct. My conviction is that it is here, because it is true.

This is really the same kind of reasoning that leads us to believe in the wonder and mystery of a physical universe. We do not believe in this wonderful unity because we can wholly demonstrate it by physical evidence. It is not even an apparent unity to a child or a savage. It is a unity which nature doubtless suggests, but we have to admit that it hardly could be at all except for the demand of our minds to discover unity. Our faith in a universe is not merely the outgrowth of the observation of outward phenomena; it is also a sort of intellectual or spiritual necessity, without which the mind is baffled and stupefied. So, too, we find that the hope of immortality belongs to that deeper unity of thought and conception, of which our interpretation of the outward nature is merely an image.

Finally, the tremendous question recurs, How can these things be? This is the underlying mystery in all life. In this

world of wonderful and dramatic possibilities, where the facts are daily more startling than any miracle, we not only do not need to know precisely how immortality may be, but we suspect that we are better off with the hope than we could be with a kind of knowledge, for which we are not yet ready or sufficiently developed. As it is well for the child that he cannot be told the experiences of manhood and parenthood, so it is well for men generally to be obliged to see the future as we see distant mountains in a haze of cloud-land. "Clouds and darkness are round about" them. It is enough that rifts of sunlight are in the clouds and the broad bases of the hills are there, whether we see their summits or not.

Meantime golden hours of vision come to us in this present life, when we are at our best, and our faculties work together in harmony. There are times when intelligence is full and quick, our feelings are healthy, matching great thoughts, and good

will possesses us. In these best hours the mere limits of space and time seem small; we appear to belong to a divine universe, we are admitted to share in the universal thought, we feel the unity of all things, we are at one through sympathy with all who live, toil, suffer, and aspire. We follow one purpose of beneficence. This is the sanest as well as the highest of human experiences. It purifies us, it both rests and inspires us for better work, more conscientious, wiser, more accurate, more disinterested, more effectual. We are in such hours most truly ourselves as individuals, or persons, while we seem to belong to the Universal Life—the one Person that constitutes the world. Is it not this of which Wordsworth writes?—

“that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened, — that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on, —

Until the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul ;  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things."

Does any one imagine the food which we eat to be real, and these great experiences of life to be less real ?

Here, then, is a sort of earnest or foretaste of the immortal life. We surmise that immortality is like this. At our highest and best we have discovered the quality of immortality. We are content ; in view of certain supreme experiences which life offers here and now we say, "All is well." We cannot doubt that whatever comes will also be well. This is the faith of religion, growing out of the most impressive facts. This faith grows equally out of the highest reaches of our intelligence.











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